

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-28: Canceled

29. (New, based on Claim 24) A countercurrent stripping pipe for removing volatile organic constituents from reaction products, comprising:

a column pipe composed of a plurality of pipe sections connected to one another by flange connections, in which pipe sections trays are arranged, a plurality of successive trays being connected to one another to form at least two separate inserts which can be removed from the column pipe;

first connections for supplying and removing the reaction products; and

second connections for supplying and removing at least one stripping agent in countercurrent to the reaction products,

wherein internal diameters of successive pipe sections decrease from top to bottom and a removable insert is arranged in each pipe section.

30. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 29, wherein up to 10 inserts are arranged in the column pipe.

31. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 30, wherein each insert has from 3 to 10 trays.

32. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 30, wherein each insert has from 4 to 7 trays.

33. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 30, wherein each insert has 6 trays.

34. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 29, wherein a diameter of the trays of one insert corresponds substantially to an internal diameter of the column pipe.

35. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 34, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 100 to 2500 mm.

36. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 34, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 500 to 1600 mm.

37. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 34, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 200 to 1000 mm.

38. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 34, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 400 to 600 mm.

39. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 29, further comprising a widened column top configured to be removable.

40. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 29, further comprising a widened column top including an aperture which can be closed and whose diameter is configured to permit removal of the inserts.

41. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 29, wherein the inserts stand on top of one another in the column pipe.

42. (New, based on Claim 25) A countercurrent stripping pipe for removing volatile organic constituents from reaction products, comprising:

a column pipe composed of a plurality of pipe sections connected to one another by flange connections, in which pipe sections trays are arranged, a plurality of successive trays being connected to one another to form at least two separate inserts which can be removed from the column pipe;

first connections for supplying and removing the reaction products; and

second connections for supplying and removing at least one stripping agent in countercurrent to the reaction products,

wherein

internal diameters of successive pipe sections decrease from top to bottom and a removable insert is arranged in each pipe section, and

the inserts lie on steplike connecting regions between each pair of successive pipe sections.

43. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 42, wherein up to 10 inserts are arranged in the column pipe.

44. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 43, wherein each insert has from 3 to 10 trays.

45. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 43, wherein each insert has from 4 to 7 trays.

46. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 43, wherein each insert has 6 trays.

47. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 42, wherein a diameter of the trays of one insert corresponds substantially to an internal diameter of the column pipe.

48. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 47, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 100 to 2500 mm.

49. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 47, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 500 to 1600 mm.

50. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 47, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 200 to 1000 mm.

51. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 47, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 400 to 600 mm.

52. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 42, further comprising a widened column top configured to be removable.

53. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 42, further comprising a widened column top including an aperture which can be closed and whose diameter is configured to permit removal of the inserts.

54. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 42, wherein the inserts stand on top of one another in the column pipe.

55. (New) A method of removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric products, comprising:

feeding a polymeric product containing volatile organic constituents into the countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 29 under conditions to remove volatile organic constituents from the polymeric product.

56. (New) A method of removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric products, comprising:

feeding a polymeric product containing volatile organic constituents into the countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 42 under conditions to remove volatile organic constituents from the polymeric product.

57. (New) A method of replacing an organic solvent of a polymer solution with water, comprising:

feeding a polymer solution containing an organic solvent into the countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 29 under conditions to replace the organic solvent with water.

58. (New) A method of replacing an organic solvent of a polymer solution with water, comprising:

feeding a polymer solution containing an organic solvent into the countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 42 under conditions to replace the organic solvent with water.

59. (New) A method of removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric products, comprising:

feeding a polymeric product containing volatile organic constituents into a countercurrent stripping pipe comprising a column pipe composed of a plurality of pipe sections connected to one another via flange connections, in which pipe sections trays are arranged, a plurality of successive trays being connected to one another to form at least two separate inserts which can be removed from the column pipe,

connections for supplying and removing the reaction products, and

connections for supplying and removing at least one stripping agent in countercurrent to the reaction products for removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric reaction products,

under conditions to remove volatile organic constituents from the polymeric product.

60. (New) A method as claimed in claim 59, wherein up to 10 inserts are arranged in the column pipe.

61. (New) A method as claimed in claim 60, wherein each insert has from 3 to 10 trays.

62. (New) A method as claimed in claim 60, wherein each insert has from 4 to 7 trays.

63. (New) A method as claimed in claim 60, wherein each insert has 6 trays.

64. (New) A method as claimed in claim 59, wherein a diameter of the trays of one insert corresponds substantially to an internal diameter of the column pipe.

65. (New) A method as claimed in claim 64 wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 100 to 2500 mm.

66. (New) A method as claimed in claim 64, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 500 to 1600 mm.

67. (New) A method as claimed in claim 64, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 200 to 1000 mm.

68. (New) A method as claimed in claim 64, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 400 to 600 mm.

69. (New) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising a widened column top configured to be removable.

70. (New) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising a widened column top including an aperture which can be closed and whose diameter is configured to permit removal of the inserts.

71. (New) A method as claimed in claim 59, wherein internal diameters of successive pipe sections decrease from top to bottom and a removable insert is arranged in each pipe section.

72. (New) A method as claimed in claim 71, wherein the inserts lie on steplike connecting regions between each pair of successive pipe sections.

73. (New) A method as claimed in claim 59, wherein the inserts stand on top of one another in the column pipe.

74. (New) A method of removing residual volatiles from polymer dispersions, comprising:

feeding a polymer dispersion containing residual volatiles into a countercurrent stripping pipe comprising a column pipe composed of a plurality of pipe sections connected to one another via flange connections, in which pipe sections trays are arranged, a plurality of successive trays being connected to one another to form at least two separate inserts which can be removed from the column pipe,

connections for supplying and removing the reaction products, and
connections for supplying and removing at least one stripping agent in countercurrent to the reaction products for removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric reaction products,

under conditions to remove residual volatiles from the polymer dispersion.

75. (New) A method as claimed in claim 74 wherein up to 10 inserts are arranged in the column pipe.

76. (New) A method as claimed in claim 75, wherein each insert has from 3 to 10 trays.

77. (New) A method as claimed in claim 75, wherein each insert has from 4 to 7 trays.

78. (New) A method as claimed in claim 75, wherein each insert has 6 trays.

79. (New) A countercurrent stripping pipe as claimed in claim 74, wherein a diameter of the trays of one insert corresponds substantially to an internal diameter of the column pipe.

80. (New) A method as claimed in claim 79, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 100 to 2500 mm.

81. (New) A method as claimed in claim 79, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 500 to 1600 mm.

82. (New) A method as claimed in claim 79, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 200 to 1000 mm.

83. (New) A method as claimed in claim 79, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 400 to 600 mm.

84. (New) A method as claimed in claim 74, further comprising a widened column top configured to be removable.

85. (New) A method as claimed in claim 74, further comprising a widened column top including an aperture which can be closed and whose diameter is configured to permit removal of the inserts.

86. (New) A method as claimed in claim 74, wherein internal diameters of successive pipe sections decrease from top to bottom and a removable insert is arranged in each pipe section.

87. (New) A method as claimed in claim 86, wherein the inserts lie on steplike connecting regions between each pair of successive pipe sections.

88. (New) A method as claimed in claim 74, wherein the inserts stand on top of one another in the column pipe.

89. (New) A method of replacing an organic solvent of a polymer solution with water, comprising:

feeding a polymer solution containing an organic solvent into a a countercurrent stripping pipe comprising a column pipe composed of a plurality of pipe sections connected to one another via flange connections, in which pipe sections trays are arranged, a plurality of successive trays being connected to one another to form at least two separate inserts which can be removed from the column pipe,

connections for supplying and removing the reaction products, and

connections for supplying and removing at least one stripping agent in countercurrent to the reaction products for removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric reaction products,

under conditions to replace the organic solvent with water.

90. (New) A method as claimed in claim 89, wherein up to 10 inserts are arranged in the column pipe.

91. (New) A method as claimed in claim 90, wherein each insert has from 3 to 10 trays.

92. (New) A method as claimed in claim 90, wherein each insert has from 4 to 7 trays.

93. (New) A method as claimed in claim 90, wherein each insert has 6 trays.

94. (New) A method as claimed in claim 89, wherein a diameter of the trays of one insert corresponds substantially to an internal diameter of the column pipe.

95. (New) A method as claimed in claim 94, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 100 to 2500 mm.

96. (New) A method as claimed in claim 94, wherein the diameter of the trays of the one insert is from 500 to 1600 mm.

97. (New) A method as claimed in claim 94, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 200 to 1000 mm.

98. (New) A method as claimed in claim 94, wherein a distance between successive trays in an insert is from 400 to 600 mm.

99. (New) A method as claimed in claim 89, further comprising a widened column top configured to be removable.

100. (New) A method as claimed in claim 89, further comprising a widened column top including an aperture which can be closed and whose diameter is configured to permit removal of the inserts.

101. (New) A method as claimed in claim 89, wherein internal diameters of successive pipe sections decrease from top to bottom and a removable insert is arranged in each pipe section.

102. (New) A method as claimed in claim 101, wherein the inserts lie on steplike connecting regions between each pair of successive pipe sections.

103. (New) A method as claimed in claim 89, wherein the inserts stand on top of one another in the column pipe.

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

The specification has been amended to insert a reference to the international application. Newly-added Claims 29-103 are supported by the specification at pages 3-14 and by original Claims 1-11. No new matter is believed to have been added to the present application by the amendments submitted above.